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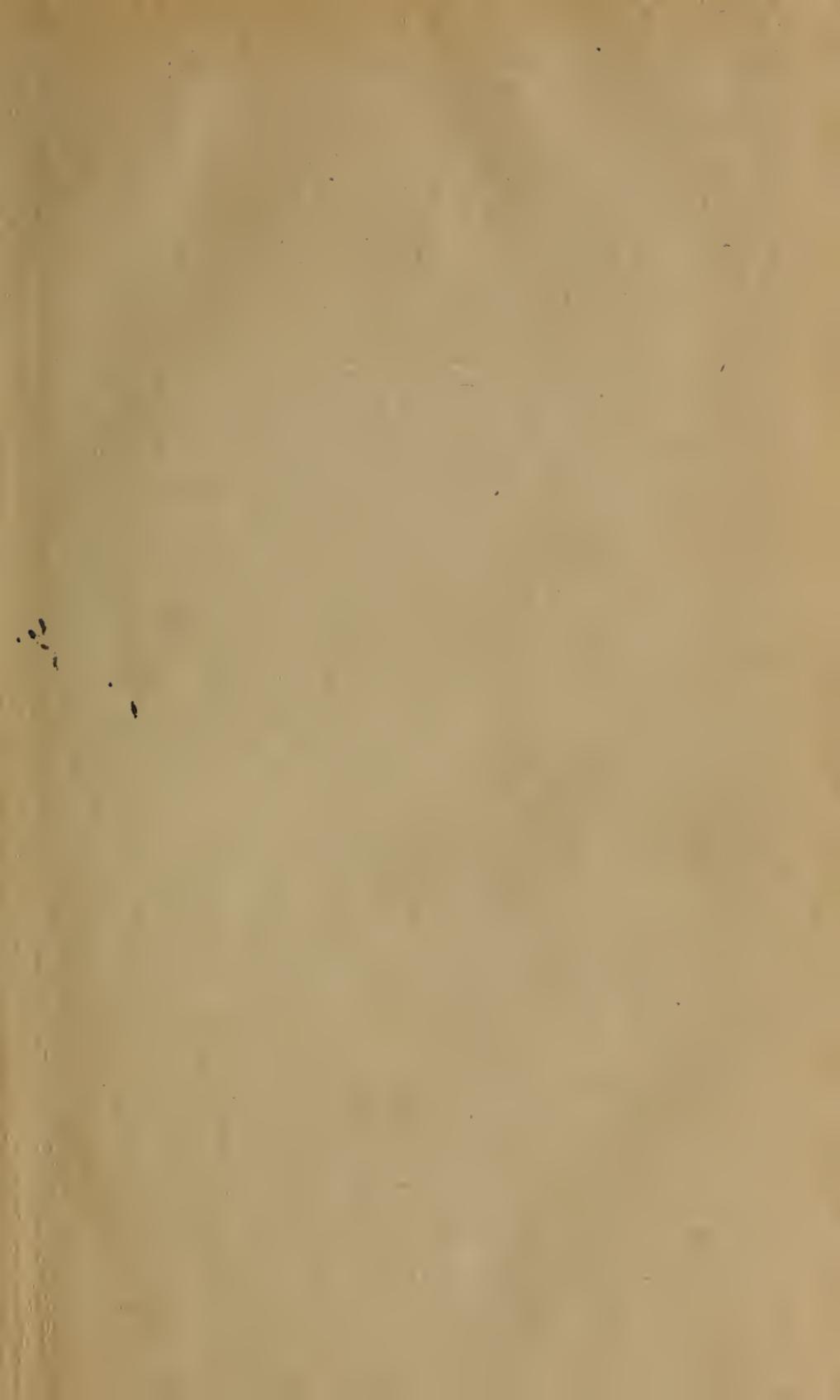


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1862













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*City Document. — No. 1.*

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A D D R E S S

OF THE

HON. WILLIAM GASTON, MAYOR,

TO THE

CITY COUNCIL OF (ROXBURY,) — /

DELIVERED TO THE

TWO BRANCHES IN CONVENTION,

JANUARY 6, 1862.



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PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

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38

ROXBURY:

L. B. & O. E. WESTON, PRINTERS, GUILD ROW.

1862.

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1862

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## City of Roxbury.

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IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, January 6, 1862.

ORDERED, That one thousand copies of the Address of His Honor the Mayor, be printed for the use of the City Council, and for distribution among the citizens.

Sent down for concurrence:

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk.*

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IN COMMON COUNCIL, January 6, 1862.

Concurred.

JOSHUA SEAVER, *Clerk.*

## A D D R E S S.

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GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL:

THE year which is before us must be productive of events of great national moment, the consequences of which must visit us all. What these events are to be, no human sagacity can foretell.

We have been aroused from the deep and tranquil slumbers of peace, to the roar and tumult of arms. We are in the midst of a struggle involving national life, and also involving the hopes and destinies of more than thirty millions of people. On the issue of this struggle depend the highest temporal interests of us all. Beyond a confiding faith in the ultimate success of our cause, we have nothing to guide us but uncertain speculations. A week, a day, an *hour* of the future, is impenetrable to our vision. Here human wisdom finds itself utterly at fault. Here no ray of light shines upon the darkness of human comprehension. It is, therefore, eminently proper for us as a Christian people, who have so long enjoyed the richest benefactions of God, bowing now submissively to His will, to invoke His blessing upon our efforts to sustain a Government, upon the continuance of which our temporal hopes so largely depend.

The duties of every citizen are now an hundred-fold greater than in times of peace. Patriotism can now find

no excuse in lethargy or in inaction. A man, to be worth anything, must be awake, decided and energetic.

He who slumbers had better be dead. He who doubts had better be a traitor; for open treason is better than dead patriotism. The courage which rises with every obstacle, is the courage which prevails. There may be days of darkness before us, but beyond those days of darkness must be days of light — and seeing glimpses of the light which is beyond the clouds, let us labor, hope, and persevere.

Gentlemen, — You have succeeded to more than ordinary municipal duties. As the obligations of the citizens have increased by the imminence of the dangers, which surround their country, so have your obligations as representatives of citizens increased for the same reason; and I have no doubt that you approach these high duties, with an entire appreciation of their extent and importance, and with no disposition to avoid them.

For several years preceding the last year, large expenditures had been made, and as a necessary consequence, the city debt had been largely increased. This consideration, pressed upon the attention of the last City Government the necessity of great retrenchment in our expenses, and they therefore entered upon their labors, with this idea prominently before them, and with the determined purpose to infuse the spirit of economy into the administration of our municipal affairs; but the great national events, to which I have already alluded, interfered with the full accomplishment of their purpose. In the presence of these events, all ideas of economy faded into comparative insignificance.

An endangered Capital was to be protected, at any and all cost or sacrifice. An army was to be provided for, and supported in the field — the families which the soldiers had left behind them, were to be guarded against suffering and distress — and the means to accomplish these results

were to be furnished. The urgencies of the occasion swept away, for the time, the strict technicalities of the law, and the doors of the treasury, by common consent, were opened for these purposes.

The Capital was saved — immediate danger ceased to exist; but soon after, the rebellion began to assume its gigantic proportions, and to force upon the City Government the conviction that its suppression must be the work of time, and that the city must make provisions for military matters of a permanent character, and that even here prudence and economy must not be disregarded.

The spirit of patriotism, as well as our immediate duty to the city, calls upon us to guard with care against any tendency to profuseness or extravagance. It is by a prudent husbandry of our means, that we shall gather strength for the conflict which is before us, and it is therefore eminently a time when all unnecessary expenditures are to be avoided. Permit me, therefore, at the outset, to suggest strict economy as a leading feature of the administration of the present year.

A part of our citizens have left us to enter upon the service of the country in the camp, and upon the field. Those of us who remain at home have duties which, if not as arduous or as perilous, are of scarcely less importance. An army abroad must be sustained and provided for by those who stay at home. From the ordinary pursuits of peace, must flow the means with which to prosecute a war. No citizen has a right, in times like these, to dissipate in needless expenses the wealth which his country needs. These considerations call upon us especially as representatives of the people, to guard, protect, and preserve the public resources with vigilance and care.

Permit me to call your attention to a few suggestions upon matters of local interest. The time and occasion will allow no labored discussion of these subjects.

## SCHOOLS.

The report of the School Committee of the last year has recently been distributed among the citizens. To that report, rather than to any information which it is in my power to give, you will look for the purpose of ascertaining the condition of the Schools of the City. I am happy to believe that these schools are all in the most flourishing condition.

No school-houses have been erected during the past year. The unfortunate location of the Primary School-house, in the rear of the engine-house on Centre Street, and the dilapidated condition of the building, induced the Committee on Public Instruction, at the suggestion of the School Committee, to recommend to the City Council the erection of a new building, on some desirable site, in the vicinity of the old building. The Committee on Public Instruction also recommended, at the same suggestion, the erection of an addition to the school-house on Smith Street; but the City Council feeling that, during the existing troubles, no expense should be incurred, except those which the urgent necessities of the schools demanded, did not adopt either of the orders recommended by the Committee.

The same reasons now exist for deferring, still further, the erection of these structures, unless the demand for school accommodations is greater than it was last year. Upon this subject you will doubtless receive suggestions from the School Committee.

## STREETS.

The expenditures on Streets for several years have been very large, and should now be materially reduced. I know of no urgent demand for new streets, or for widening old ones. The existing streets must be kept in good repair; beyond this no expense of any magnitude should be incurred.

During the past year, I believe but one piece of land was purchased for the purpose of widening streets; although the last Government was called upon to pay very large sums, for land taken and purchased in former years for this purpose, and for the damages incident to such taking.

The continuance of the policy of former years, in this matter, will overwhelm the City in debt, and an immediate and decided check to such expenses is imperiously demanded by the condition of our finances.

#### PUBLIC SQUARES.

The City Government of last year, when entering upon their duties, found the City under a contract to build a street, to be called "Bainbridge Street," extended from Walnut Street to Dale Street, and bounding on the new Public Square, in that vicinity. And they also found the city under a contract to build a street around a portion of Madison Square. These contracts have been executed by the City, at an expense (as I believe) of about \$12,000. They also found the City under a contract to fill up Madison Square, to a point eighteen feet above mean low water mark. The City are now engaged in performing their part of this contract. How much its entire execution will cost the City, it is now impossible to tell. Beyond what may be required to complete this contract, I recommend that nothing whatever be expended on the Public Squares, except what may be required for preserving them in their present condition.

#### FIRE AND POLICE DEPARTMENTS.

The Fire Department and the Police Department have each discharged their duties with entire success during the past year. They are both now in a state of entire efficiency, and our duties in respect to them, will consist chiefly in

preserving them, during the coming year, in the same effective condition in which they now are.

#### ALMS-HOUSE.

The Alms-House Establishment is under humane, and as I believe, in all respects, judicious management. The Overseers of the Poor have the more immediate, and direct care of this establishment, and have, of late, so conducted it, that it has required but very little attention on the part of the City Council.

#### FOREST HILLS.

The Cemetery at Forest Hills is increasing in dimensions and in beauty. The Commissioners, under whose wise management it has become so large and so beautiful, will doubtless make a report, which will give you full information in regard to its condition.

#### MILITARY EXPENDITURES.

The last Government assumed, early and faithfully, their share of the burden of supporting and sustaining the war; and every citizen has reason to be proud of the promptitude and liberality which the City has manifested in this respect.

Soon after the commencement of the war, the City Council appropriated the sum of \$20,000 for military purposes. This appropriation, if not legal at the time, has since, to a certain extent at least, been legalized by the Legislature of the Commonwealth, at a special session, called together for the purpose of enacting laws to meet the existing emergencies. At that session, a law was enacted giving authority to cities and towns to raise money by taxation, for the support of the families of volunteers. I need not say to you, that we can find no justification or excuse in exceeding the authority given to us by the provisions of this statute.

The early expenditures of the City were upon three companies, which have left us for active service. I am happy to say that the character of all these companies is such, as to reflect honor upon the City.

Later in the year, another company, of high character, left Roxbury, to enter upon active duty.

There has been paid for the support of families of volunteers a sum a little exceeding \$15,000. A portion of this sum, viz., about \$10,000, the City expects to receive from the Commonwealth.

The City has expended for military purposes a further sum of about \$9000. A portion of this last named sum, the City hopes to receive back again from the Commonwealth, and will petition to the Legislature of the State accordingly.

The duties of the Military Committee of last year were arduous. This should be a standing committee, as its duties are of a permanent character.

#### SEWERS.

During the past year two sewers have been constructed — one in Eustis Street, and one in Dudley Street. The Eustis Street Sewer cost \$4268.50, seventy-five per cent. of which, amounting to \$3201.38, has been assessed upon the abutters. The Dudley Street Sewer cost \$12,589.85, fifty per cent. of which, amounting to \$6294.93, has been assessed upon the abutters. The whole amount of expenditures on sewers, during the past year, was \$16,858.35, of which the sum of \$9496.31 has been assessed upon the abutters.

The necessity for sewerage is so great, that even the existing troubles furnish no excuse for discontinuing the work.

#### CITY DEBT.

On the 1st day of February, 1861, the City Debt was \$613,490. In my last annual address to the City Council, I stated that to this sum there would undoubtedly be ad-

ditions, on account of debts, then already contracted, for the payment of which money must be borrowed. These additions have largely exceeded my anticipations. The Government of last year found a large number of outstanding claims against the City, which they have been called upon to pay. They found enterprises commenced, which, as they had been started, must be completed. They found the City under very large obligations, growing out of contracts to which I have before alluded. These contracts were not to be repudiated. All these matters rendered a large increase of the City Debt absolutely necessary.

The last City Government entered upon their duties, with a determination to do nothing themselves, which should tend to enlarge the debt, and, had peace continued, I have no doubt that they would have firmly adhered to that determination.

In consequence of the breaking out of the war, extraordinary expenditures were urgently demanded by all of the citizens. The money had to be borrowed. The ordinary operations of business were for a time suspended, and a large number of people were out of employment and in distress. Sewers were needed; and it was deemed both prudent and humane to proceed at once and construct them. All classes of the people seemed to demand it. For this, also, money had to be borrowed.

The City will receive from the Commonwealth, a very considerable portion of these expenditures for military purposes.

A large amount of the money expended upon sewers, has, as I have already stated, been assessed upon the abutters. And the Government, at the conclusion of its labors, felt that the amount of permanent increase of the City Debt, caused by their action, was small, especially when the remarkable events of the year were taken into consideration.

The City Treasurer informs me that the City Debt is

now \$691,965, and that it will be considerably increased before the 1st of February next. This debt is too large, and we should endeavor to reduce it.

#### EMPLOYMENT OF THE POOR.

It is undoubtedly the dictate of common humanity, that all the work which the City Government, in the reasonable and proper exercise of its duties, needs to have performed, should be so given and distributed as to furnish relief to those who are immediately and directly dependent on their labor for their support. But great care should be taken, that this relief does not become the main object, rather than the incident of our City Expenditures. If it becomes understood, that labor is furnished simply and only for the relief it will give, large numbers from the populous cities and towns in the vicinity, will be attracted hither, and thus exclude our own poor, to some extent, from the benefits which they would otherwise receive. Such an unwise policy, as that to which I have adverted, will be found to be very burdensome to the City, and will become the prolific source of a multitude of evils.

During the Summer, great apprehensions were felt that the present Winter would be one of great suffering and distress, to a very large portion of our population. I am very happy to be enabled to say, that no such unusual suffering or distress has reached us, and that the present Winter is even more favorable than usual in this regard.

Gentlemen,— We enter upon this year's service, not owing allegiance to any party, or to any sect. We are here free, untrammelled men, with no excuse for not displaying true manhood. Let us then meet the duties before us, with no fear, except the fear of doing wrong, and we shall thus, at the conclusion of our labors, be able to surrender back our trusts, with the consciousness that we have been faithful servants.





